AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

(IN FORMAT COMPLIANT WITH THE REVISED 37 CFR 1.121)

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based accounts payable system, said method comprising the steps of:

a. receiving into said system an approval for authorizing a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database;

b. determining whether said particular billing code is present in a second database comprising a second plurality of billing codes each having a second budget amount, wherein each of said second plurality of billing codes matches a corresponding one of said first plurality of billing codes;

c. generating a communication from said system authorizing said second budget amount associated with said particular billing code in response to said particular billing code matching one of said second plurality of billing codes; and

d. generating said communication authorizing said first budget amount associated with said particular billing code in response to said particular billing code matching none of said second plurality of billing codes.

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2. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 1, wherein said particular billing code is associated with a task.

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

generating an authorization form for said task before determining whether said particular billing code is present in said second database.

4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

receiving a selection of a firm associated with said second budget database prior to determining whether said particular billing code is present in said second database.

5.-7. (CANCELED)

8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said system comprising:

means for receiving an approval comprising a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database;

means for determining whether said particular billing code is present in a second database comprising a second plurality

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of billing codes each having a second budget amount, wherein each

of said second plurality of billing codes matches a corresponding

10   one of said first plurality of billing codes;

means for authorizing said second budget amount

associated with said particular billing code in response to said

particular billing code matching one of said second plurality of

billing codes; and

15   means for authorizing said first budget amount associated

with said particular billing code in response to said particular

billing code matching none of said second plurality of billing

codes.

9.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The system of claim 8,

wherein said particular billing code is associated with a task.

10.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The system of claim 9,

further comprising:

means for generating an authorization form for said task.

11.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The system of claim 8,

further comprising:

means for receiving a selection of a firm associated with

said second database.

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12.-14.   (CANCELED)

15.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said system comprising:

means for receiving a bill comprising (i) a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database and (ii) a billing amount associated with said particular billing code;

means for determining ~~an authorized amount associated with~~ whether said ~~first~~ particular billing code is present in ~~from~~ a second database comprising a second plurality of billing codes, wherein each of said second plurality of billing codes matches a corresponding one of said first plurality of billing codes; ~~and~~

means for approving payment of said billing amount in response to said particular billing code ~~amount~~ (i) matching none of said second plurality of billing codes and (ii) not exceeding said ~~authorized~~ first budget amount associated with said particular billing code; and

means for approving payment of said billing amount in response to said particular billing code (i) matching one of said second plurality of billing codes and (ii) not exceeding a second budget amount associated with said particular billing code and stored in said second database.

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16.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The system of claim 15, ~~wherein~~ further comprising:

means for receiving information into a third database that a task associated with said particular billing code ~~is associated with a task~~ has been completed.

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17.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The system of claim 16, further comprising:

means for checking said third database to determine whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

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18.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The system of claim 15, further comprising:

means for not approving payment in response to a corresponding one of said ~~authorized~~ first budget amount and said second budget amount being less than said billing amount.

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19.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The system of claim 18, further comprising:

means for automatically generating a communication in response to not approving payment.

20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The system of claim 15, wherein said bill comprises an electronic spreadsheet.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said method comprising the steps of:

a. receiving into said system a bill comprising (i) a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database and (ii) a billing amount associated with said particular billing code;

b. determining ~~an authorized amount associated with~~ whether said particular billing code is present in ~~from~~ a second database comprising a second plurality of billing codes, wherein each of said second plurality of billing codes matches a corresponding one of said first plurality of billing codes; ~~and~~

c. generating an approval from said system for payment of said billing amount in response to said particular billing ~~amount~~ code (i) matching none of said second plurality of billing codes and (ii) not exceeding said ~~authorized~~ first budget amount associated with said particular billing code; and

d. generating said approval from said system for payment of said billing amount in response to said particular billing code (i) matching one of said second plurality of billing

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codes and (ii) not exceeding a second budget amount associated with said particular billing code and stored in said second database.

22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 21, ~~wherein~~ further comprising the step of:

receiving information into a third database that a task associated with said particular billing code ~~is associated with a~~

5 ~~task~~ has been completed.

23. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of:

checking said third database to determine whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

24. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of:

not approving payment in response to a corresponding one of said ~~authorized~~ first budget amount and said second budget

5 amount being less than said billing amount.

25. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 21, wherein said bill comprises an electronic spreadsheet.

26. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:

calculating a due date for completion of said task.

27. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of:

automatically sending said authorization form with said due date to a selected firm.

28. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of:

entering one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount into a third database.

29. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for calculating a due date for completion of said task.

30. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The system of claim 15, further comprising:

means for approving payment of a corresponding one of said ~~authorized~~ first budget amount and said second budget amount in response to said billing amount exceeding said ~~authorized~~

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corresponding one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount.

31.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of:

approving payment of ~~said authorized~~ of a corresponding one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount in response to said billing amount exceeding said ~~authorized~~ said corresponding one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount.